

etruscan antiquities are closely connected with those of Egypt: e.g. scarabæi are found in great numbers in carved out of hard stone, lapis lazuli &c., & the funeral and lacrymatories found in Egyptian tombs are very similar to those discovered in the sepulchres of Volscia & Tarracina.

A

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

OF THE

ETRUSCAN AND GREEK

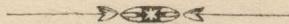
ANTIQUITIES

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TO
SAMUEL ROGERS, ESQUIRE,
THE ILLUSTRIOUS ENGLISH POET,
AND THE
ENLIGHTENED PATRON OF ART,
AS WELL MODERN AS ANCIENT,
THIS LITTLE DESCRIPTION
OF SOME OF THE
ANTIQUITIES LATELY DISCOVERED IN ETRURIA,
AND NOW EXHIBITED TO THE BRITISH PUBLIC,
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A DESCRIPTION,

&c. &c.

THE English Authors of the Universal History were amongst the earliest writers who explained, by their learned observations, the history of the Etruscans, and their usages. I hope, therefore, to meet the approbation of the English public in exhibiting a specimen of the monuments of that ancient people, particularly of the kind to which they seem to have been most partial, namely, the funereal monuments; for it is in these that we perceive the most striking evidence of the correct notions they entertained respecting the immortality of the soul, of their pious regard for the deceased, and of their taste for splendour and magnificence.

Their modes of sepulture were of various kinds. Previously to the period when this nation attained the great power and wealth at which it arrived, some centuries anterior to Rome, they practised the most simple mode of interring their

dead. These were placed within a trench, which was covered over with large tiles, and above these was thrown the earth which had been taken out. They frequently also deposited the dead in conical holes, excavated at a considerable depth under ground, in a horizontal direction, the descent into which was by a well of equal depth, cut perpendicularly. Here they heaped the bodies one over the other and covered them with earth ; and, when the hole was full, they shut up the aperture with a large stone. But it soon became a general practice, as indeed had always been the case, for the more distinguished individuals to deposit them in subterraneous chambers ; the shapes of which varied according to the greater or less consistency of the material in which they were excavated. Where this was of sufficient solidity, and particularly if it presented a continued line of rock in the neighbourhood of the city (for they were ever anxious to have their cemeteries near at hand, and, as it were, under the eyes of the living, though considerations of health forbade them from burying within the walls), they never failed to enrich the rock, within which were the tombs, with ornaments ; this we see in many places, particularly at Castel d'Asso, and at

Norchia, near Viterbo and Brera ; where they sculptured various architectural members, gates, pilasters, pediments, and friezes, with columns and statues ; the whole relieved upon the surface of the rock. Sometimes they inscribed, in large letters, the motto :

ECAZAVIONEZ

which is interpreted to be “ Hail in peace.”

The interior of the chambers was frequently enriched with a range of beams on the vaulted roofs, and other ornaments ; sometimes with couches in the form of a triclinium : this continued till the usage was adopted of burning the bodies, when the ashes were collected in an urn and deposited in similar grottoes. When an individual of distinction, either for his deeds or for the public functions which he had discharged, was buried, the whole interior of the tomb was painted. Of this practice we are now enabled to exhibit a beautiful specimen, from two grottoes in Tarquinia, the paintings in which are faithfully copied, of the same size, and conformably to the shape of the tomb. Besides the decorations of the chambers, we have added also the urns or receptacles of the bodies or bones of the interred, all made of the rocks of the coun-

try, called peperino ; for at this period they had not began to work either the marble of Luna or the Greek or African Marbles, which were afterwards introduced by the Romans.

From these specimens, it is evident that the urns frequently presented, on the fascia or upper cornice, the epitaph of the deceased, which comprised his own name and that of his family, his age, and sometimes various particulars of his life. At the top of the urn was placed the statue of the deceased, in a recumbent position, whether male or female, if their condition had been such as to call for this mark of distinction. Within the urns we have often found, together with the skull and bones, the favorite objects of the deceased, which he or she had used when living ; such as a woman's gold ornaments, the whole or parts of the armour of a warrior, mirrors, cistuses, dice, table utensils, and pieces of money of very antient date. The excavations which I and my family have undertaken and carried on at Vulci, since the year 1828, prove abundantly that, whether the deceased were honoured with urns or not, it was the general practice to inter, with them in the tombs, and close to the body, vases of metal, terra-cotta, or glass, comprising some with very

beautiful paintings, also cups, candelabra, tripods, perfume vases, and various other articles possessed during life, and particularly such as had been conferred as the reward of valour, or as honorary testimonies of distinction in athletic combats. For the same reason also, we found, in the tombs, not only the warriors' arms, and sometimes the remains of their chariots of war, but most frequently also the bones of dogs and horses which had accompanied them on military expeditions. These vessels, as well as the other objects, are frequently found suspended by nails on the walls of the grottoes, as we have here exhibited : and we beg again to assure the public that the whole is a faithful representation of the forms of the tombs, and of the arrangement of the objects found in them.

DESCRIPTION

OF

THE FIRST CHAMBER.

This chamber has been lately discovered on the antient road leading from Toscanella (Tuscania) to Corneto (Tarquinia). The ap-

pearance of the front is one of the most frequent among the Etruscan, and bears above the entrance the following inscription :

ECAZAVONIEZ

In the thickness of the wall, at the entrance, are painted two Charons, or guardians at the gate of the dead, with strange and disagreeable countenances, after the Etruscan fashion. Both of them bear the double mace, to chastise the wicked who might attempt to violate the tranquillity of the tombs. One of them is also armed with a scythe.

This chamber bears no pictures, and the walls are cut in the massy natural rock. To the left hand we see an urn with the recumbent statue of an old matron, the whole of peperino. The bas-relief of the front piece of the urn presents a head of Medusa, having on either side a dolphin, the Tyrrhenian symbol. A statue of a boy, perhaps the son of the matron, stands beside ; he is entirely naked, except a sash that girdles him round the loins and falls on one side down to his feet. The bones of the boy were contained in a little urn placed on a pedestal of peperino, which is also to be seen in the interior

of the same chamber. There is also a hearth of terra cotta, ornamented with a bas-relief representing the funereal rites ; it stands on a quadrangular piece of peperino, in front of which is sculptured the outward form of a temple or shrine. Vases and utensils of various descriptions, both of bronze and terra cotta, are appended high upon the walls.

SECOND CHAMBER.

This chamber, which was discovered on the road leading from Tuscania to Tarquinia, at a little distance from the other, does not offer in its outward parts any thing worthy of attention. The interior is painted blue, a common practice with the Tuscans. It seems to have been the sepulchre of a whole family, from the number of urns which it contains. The first that we see to the right hand presents, in front, a combat of three warriors, scarcely blocked out. Its cover offers to the sight the recumbent statue of a priest of Bacchus, which quality is evinced by the pretericulum he holds in his hand, by the ivy chaplet he wears on his head, and by the sacred utensils hanging from the wall on his side. Within the urn are the remains of his

body, and some few objects which the antients were accustomed to bury with the body of the deceased.

The next urn presents to us a male figure on the top : it is inscribed with Etruscan characters, bearing the name and descent of the departed, as we shall see hereafter. This inscription has been engraved, as usual, on the fascia, or upper cornice of the principal side. Here is also a bas-relief representing two marine monsters, face to face ; between them is a disk, intended for a Gorgon, as is evident from other examples, which prove to us that these monsters were usually represented as bearing the souls of the deceased into the Elysian fields. The marine monsters are quite finished ; but the disk between them, which the sculptor intended to form into a Gorgon, or head of Medusa, is only sketched or blocked out. We have other similar examples, which shew that these monuments were consigned to artists at or about the period of the deaths of the individuals who were to be interred in them, and that it sometimes happened that the funeral ceremonies would take place before the work was completed. We perceive also that the statues were real portraits of the deceased ;

for, although they always exhibit the type of the national physiognomy, they are always different from each other. The same costume is seen on these figures which we have noticed in the dresses of the spectators of the games: the men wear only a cloak, and the women the tunic and mantle. The male statues have, almost always, a patera in their hands, or else a vase. The women have frequently a branch, or a fan. The men wear, on the neck, a circular ornament, surrounded with a riband in spirals, which it is difficult to define more accurately. On the head they wear a pileas or helmet, with a border in front, and plain behind. The statue now before us has a ring in the hand; which was also the custom for women to wear, with other ornaments, such as ear-rings, clasps, and diadems.

The inscription is as follows

...W3C//AZIA//:QAN4CI//A:ACI//Z:CIZ:CEA//:4S
- C11|NAN<:MEODE:EEAOAD

which, according to Lanzi (*Sag. di Lin. Etr.*), and later proofs, may be translated—Vibius or Vibianus Sethrius (or Sextus) Velthurius, Medosia natus Tanaquilis filia, vixit annos (more or less) quinquaginta, (and perhaps) semis. This expression *cis CEAL* is new, as well as the last.

z, after the mark ↓, expressing the number of years. From their position, we may conjecture that it signified what the Latins, in speaking of years, expressed by *plus minus*. Indeed, cis is also a Latin word, meaning the reverse of *ultra*; and it is not unlikely that CEAL, in Etruscan, was the equivalent of *ultra*; but we must wait for further authorities before this can be determined, as well as for the meaning of z, which we suspect may be rendered *semis*.

The third statue represents a warrior, as we may judge from the bas-relief of a military car, guided by the warrior himself: behind him is a genius with expanded wings, followed by three palm-bearers in procession, and by a fourth, who bears on his arms an instrument which looks like a crooked trumpet. The whole alludes to some warlike deed of the deceased: these bas-reliefs, indicative of a triumph, announce the usages of the nation, and the glory which awaited the defenders of their country.

The inscription upon this urn is as follows:

✓E0.A✓ELA.Z✓IDATAFIVDA HIOAHLE:IX↑
✓FIA.E✓CIAZ.AATZ ✓AOQ✓✓EF.ZAAAYA.

We may here read the words *Azio Velio*, and his age, 61. The greater part of the remainder, which doubtless expressed the particulars of his

life, are unintelligible for want of others to compare them with ; the words are quite new, as well as the circumstance of so much writing after the age, which is generally at the end. We can only distinguish the word *CΞΜΑ cæpta*, evidently a Latin word; but it will not admit of an interpretation without further authorities.

The last urn of this chamber contained the remains of a young woman, as the statue lying on the cover undoubtedly proves. The bas-relief of this urn presents a bearded head, covered with a Phrygian cap, the point of which falls over the forehead. Beside it are two marine monsters, mounted by two boys, which was symbolical of the passage of the soul over the ocean to the Elysian fields. The statue on the cover presents a young woman, on whose countenance we may observe that there are marks remaining which prove that it was painted red; which was common also with male statues, and with the urns themselves. This was done to honor the deceased; for the same may be observed of statues of deities: and the custom was afterwards imitated by the Romans. The gold ornaments of the women were coloured yellow, to represent that metal; as is apparent from the diadem of the young lady. Here

too it is clear that the countenances are real portraits; and that of the girl, who is very beautiful, was completed by the artist, though her dress is only blocked out; probably, as observed before, for want of time.

Vases and cups are appended on the walls all around, as in the first chamber; and a beautiful tripod of Etruscan workmanship was found in the middle of the chamber, over against the door, which seems to have served in the performance of the funereal rites of the deceased.

THIRD CHAMBER.

Above the door of this chamber, inside, there are two panthers. This was a mystical animal of the Etruscans, who thus placed them, as well as other animals, as the keepers of the sepulchres. They were also consecrated to Bacchus, who, in Etruria, was supposed to preside over funerals. On each side of the door are the trees or branches, bearing leaves, to indicate a rural site.

On the three other walls the painting is divided into two compartments; the lowest of which rests on a cornice of various colours.

In the lower compartment, the paintings are about four palms high. In the upper one, their height is not more than one palm and five-sixths. In the lower range, on the right hand, are three youths, alternating with three females, and dancing to the sound of a double flute, played by one of the women. The men have a light cloak, leaving a great part of their bodies exposed. The dancing girls are clothed in a rich thin tunic, embroidered with small stars, and a very light mantle or cloak, floating in the air. The tunics and the cloak have an elegant border. The men and women are crowned with myrtle; the former wear on their necks a blue necklace; the latter have no necklace, but have sandals and an embroidered head-dress: the head and feet of the men are uncovered. The dance is kept up with great animation, not only by the quick movement of the feet and person, but mainly by beating time with the hands, which are open and extended. Amongst the figures are small shrubs, loaded with leaves; and, at the foot of the wall, is a table, with painted vases of various sizes, which contain the liquor sacred to Bacchus and to Mirth.

In the upper compartment of the picture, on the wall to the right, preparations are

making for chariot-races in the circus. Four cars are seen, three with the horses already harnessed to them, each ready to start, under the guidance of the charioteer; the fourth is about to be got ready; a fifth is obliterated, but the horses are there, ready to be harnessed, with the driver and the attendants. At the extremity of the picture is a kind of balcony, with spectators; above which is visible the awning, folded back, to be used if wanted. The balcony is divided into an upper and a lower story. In the former are seated the most distinguished individuals: the women are clothed in a short tunic and mantle, with caps on their heads; the men have only a cloak, without the tunic. This was the usual dress of the Etruscans; and the countenances present to us the true type of their physiognomy. Under the balcony are seated the youths of the plebeian class, as is apparent from their dress.

SIDE OPPOSITE THE DOOR.

The picture is, as usual, divided into two compartments; but, instead of a dance, it exhibits three triclinia, on each of which are

reclined a man and a woman, half upright, leaning on double cushions : two naked youths assist at the table ; one of whom holds in his hand a branch of myrtle, and the other a kind of rod or wand, the use of which is not ascertained : near these, is one playing on the double flute.

We should here notice the rich ornaments of the dresses, the beds, and the gold necklaces. All who are seated on the triclinium are crowned with the myrtle, sacred to Bacchus ; and two of the guests are drinking from cups. Four of them hold in their hands a white apple, or perhaps an egg. Under two of the beds are six ducks (Bacchanalian birds,) as if ready to catch what might fall from the table.

In the upper compartment is continued the spectacle of athletic games, the figures being of the same size ; but with a single balcony for the spectators, which, at each end of the angle of the chamber, join to those on the adjoining walls. The athletic exhibitions are those of wrestling, over which a wand-bearer presides, the cestus, and leaping on foot, on horseback, and with a lance. The athletæ are all naked. On this side, the picture is continued above the two compartments already mentioned, and

covers the whole wall, following the plan of the ceiling, which appears to rest upon a corbel. In the centre is painted a large vase, on both sides of which are represented two women, naked, standing upright, with dishevelled hair, each with a small vase or prefericulum in her hands. Beyond the corbel, the remainder of the wall is occupied by two men, lying down, and leaning on a double cushion. One of them, who wears a beard and a crown of myrtle, is clothed to the waist in a cloak. The other is beardless, wears a crown of laurel, and the same sort of dress. Both are in the act of drinking out of a cup.

In the lower compartment of the third wall, on the left hand, the dance is resumed. This is exactly similar in gestures and dresses to that represented on the opposite side : gymnastic games too are repeated in the upper compartment, and particularly boxing, throwing of the discus, hurling of the lance, and the foot-race ; and these are accompanied as before by the Agonothetæ or judges.

The vaulted roof of the chamber is divided by a beam resting on the two corbels, at the door and facing it ; this beam is ornamented with several rosettes mixed with ivy leaves ; the

remaining space of the vault is painted in chequers of various colours, which are composed as follows, both on the ceiling and on the walls : lime is used for the white ; there are also red earth, black earth, and smalt for the blue and green : of these four colours are composed all the tints which are employed.

In the middle of the chamber we see an urn larger than the others, and sculptured on all sides, which, as Lanzi observes in his *Saggio della Lingua Etrusca*, is not usual, and is a proof that it was made for some very distinguished personage. At the head of the urn is represented a fight, emblematic of the exhibition of gladiators, in honour of the deceased. The bas-reliefs on the other three sides pourtray the barbarous sacrifices of human victims, men and women, who are forcibly dragged to be pnt to death, before the altar, amidst the lamentations and despair of their relatives. In early times the Greeks were not free from this stain upon their character, as we learn from that part of the Iliad where Homer describes the funeral of Patroclus, at which Achilles sacrificed twelve victims chosen from the most illustrious of the Trojan prisoners. This remarkable urn has unfortunately been much injured ; but we may still

perceive and admire the noble character of the composition, as well as of the workmanship. Only a few letters remain of the Etruscan inscription, which, as usual, contained the name of the deceased.

At the top of the urn was either a lid or a recumbent statue; for there can be no doubt that the urn was intended to be seen on all sides, which was not the case with those placed against the wall of the sepulchre, ranged in a line by the side of each other. Within the urn are the scull and bones of the warrior, his arms, and some other objects of various kinds.

FOURTH CHAMBER.

This chamber exhibits to us no gymnastic or circensian games, only triclinia and dances: but we have here a greater profusion of rich dresses, chariots, and other accessories. The ceiling is, like the other, keel-shaped, and divided by a large beam, which rests upon corbels, and is entirely covered with green ivy leaves, the remainder of the square divisions being painted in rhomboid shapes of different colours. To the right and left of the console,

facing the door or entrance, are two naked men, leaning on cushions doubled up as before. Near the feet of one of them is a bird, which looks like a pigeon. On the opposite side over the entrance are two panthers, a male and female, looking straight forward, one on one side, and one on the other.

The wall on the entrance side presents to us two youths clothed in light doublets, each with a spear in his hand, and mounted on two horses, facing each other, as if they were the guardians of the gate within. The horses have no trappings, nor saddle, nor bridle, and the riders grasp the manes with their hands. On the side opposite the entrance are three triclinia, two facing the spectator, and one seen in perspective or foreshortened; on each are reposing a young man and a woman. In front of each of the two triclinia is a table with vases upon it, and before the other, in lieu of the table, is a vase standing on the ground. The cloths spread upon the tables, as well as on the triclinia, are remarkable for their elegance and rich ornaments. At the head of the guests is a flute-player, standing up, wrapped in a pallium or cloak, playing the double flute. A lad, who is serving the table, stands in the middle, and holds in one hand an utensil like a filter, in the

other a small vase. The woman, who is reclining on the first triclinium, turns towards the flute-player, and seems to be imitating his gestures. The other figures are in different attitudes, and have not yet begun to partake of the feast set before them. All wear crowns of bay or ivy, and one of the guests has in front a shoulder-belt of ivy. Other chaplets are suspended high up. At the foot of the sides of the chamber are a cat, a cock painted with many colours, and a bird resembling a partridge.

On the walls to the right and left of the door the dance is repeated, five figures are on each side, three women and two men. The first woman dancer plays at the same time on a tambourine with both hands, one of the youths plays on the flute, the other on the lyre ; but this without interrupting the dance. All the other figures accompany the dance with actions of the head, the whole body, the arms and hands. The last dancing woman holds up with both her hands a chaplet of ivy, the others, with one exception, wear the same interlaced with their hair. The dresses of the guests and dancers are very elegant, with minute embroidery, and rich borders of various colours. The cloaks flutter in the air ; the prevailing colours are red, yellow, and blue. Some of the women

wear rich necklaces and other ornaments. Between each figure is a plant of myrtle or bay, and to some of them is attached a riband with fringe. A variety of birds are perched upon the trees and branches, shewing, together with the foliage, that the scene is in the country; some small four-footed animals are also among them, two of which remain on the ground, and one has climbed up on one of the shrubs. There is also an upright vase in the place where they are dancing. The painting upon these walls rests upon a cornice composed of party-coloured lines, and is terminated by an ornament, which by Italian painters is called an *onda di mare*.

The guests, the dances, and the exhibition here represented, were not merely an ornament of the sepulchral chambers where they are found, like the decorations of our modern rooms, but they represent the actual celebration of the funereal obsequies of the deceased; to which were added also Bacchanalian orgies, accompanied with dances of unbridled licentious mirth. These usages unfold to us the ideas entertained by the Etruscans respecting death, which they conceived to be nothing else than the approach and passage to a new life in the Elysian fields; where, in union with their

deceased kinsmen and friends, they were to live in perpetual enjoyment and pleasure, feasting and dancing, and in every agreeable diversion which they had known during life. These flattering notions were certainly well fitted to remove from death every idea of horror, both in those who were to leave the world, and in those who lost by it the dearest objects of their affection. But, by one of those contradictions of the mind of man, from which the most civilized state cannot always be free, the Etruscans superadded to these joyous modes of celebrating their funerals, other rites equally cruel and mournful, not unaccompanied with the shedding of human blood.

In the middle of the chamber there is a sarcophagus, bearing no bas-relief of any kind. Yet the cover presents a priestess of Bacchus, lying supinely on the urn. She is dressed in all the pomp of her sacred attire, gold ornaments set off her neck, ears, arms, and hands. A little bird, an animal sacred to Bacchus, is lying beside her. She holds in her right hand a little vase with large handles, and a thyrsus in her left. The style of this sculpture is quite different from that of the others.

FINIS.

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